

# IOWA BIRD LIFE

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IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

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FRONT COVER: Least Bittern at Nest, Swan Lake, Johnson County, 17 June 1951. Photo by T. H. Kent.

INSIDE BACK COVER: Editorial Staff, Subscription/Membership Information, Instructions to Authors, Officers, Board of Directors, Standing Committees

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The IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. *IOWA BIRD LIFE* and *I.O.U. NEWS* are quarterly publications of the Union.

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5-7 September 1986, Waterloo

29-31 May 1987, Sioux City

**FIELD REPORTS:** Anyone observing birds in Iowa is encouraged to report their findings on a quarterly basis to the Field Reports editors. Sample reporting and documentation forms suitable for duplication are available from the editor (send self-addressed stamped envelope to T. H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52240). An article describing the reporting process is also available.

Deadlines for receipt of field reports are as follows:

Winter (Dec, Jan, Feb) - 3 March (W. Ross Silcock, Box 300, Tabor, IA 51653)

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Deadline for receipt of reports: 15 January

For forms and instructions write: W. Ross Silcock, Box 300, Tabor, IA 51653.

## IOWA BIRDLINE 319-622-3353

The birdline is a two to three minute recorded summary of interesting recent bird sightings in Iowa. At the end of the report you can leave a message and report your recent sightings. Be sure to give your name and phone number as well as the location of the bird and date seen. Call in as soon as possible after sighting a rare bird. Carl Bendorf checks the reports daily and updates the recording on Monday, so make sure Sunday sightings are reported by Sunday night.

## I.O.U. NEWS

Send items of interest for the newsletter to the editors (J. Hank and Linda Zaletel, 715 West St., Colo, IA 50056).

## MATERIALS AVAILABLE

Back issues of *Iowa Bird Life* - send self-addressed stamped envelope to the Editor of Iowa Bird Life for order form.

## REPORTING NEBRASKA BIRDS

Sightings of Nebraska birds, including those within the Nebraska portion of DeSoto NWR, should be reported to Loren and Babs Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, NE 68005. Formats for reporting and documentation are the same as for Iowa.

## MEET TWO IOWA BIRDERS: CHARLES AND DARLEEN AYRES

ELAINE JOHNSON AND DON JOHNSON

For more than seventy of his eighty years Charles C. Ayres Jr. has been obsessed with bird identification and behavior. Birding and related activities have almost solely directed his life. Darleen's interest in nature became more bird-oriented after she met Charles.

Charles was born to Nellie and Charles C. Ayres Sr. on 21 August 1906 in Ottumwa, Iowa. In order to provide musical instruction for Charles' older brother Harold, a child prodigy of the violin, the family moved to Chicago in 1912. Young Charles was exposed to the cello, but this did not have the attraction needed for him to excel. The Ayres' apartment was located across the street from Lincoln Park and the Chicago Academy of Science. Charles' mother took him for walks in the park, and he was intrigued with the birds that he saw there. She was quite knowledgeable about birds and made a fine birding companion for Charles.

Charles' high school zoology teacher encouraged students with interests in nature by organizing birding contests. Each spring during March, April, and May, students would prepare a 3 x 5 inch paper with data about a bird they had seen and place it on a spindle in the zoology lab. Credit was given for the first sighting of the year, the most species, and the most unusual bird. One year Charles was the leader with 153



species and also won in several other categories. His good friend and classmate Walter Weber (later an accomplished wildlife artist) got the recognition of the earliest record for a Least Bittern that they had found by a pond in Lincoln Park. Walter managed this by entering the school at night and placing his note on the spindle before Charles could enter the school the next morning.

Charles Sr. had given up his law practice in Ottumwa to move his family to Chicago where he worked for an insurance company. After graduating from high school in 1923, Charles Jr. went to work for the same company. He later returned to Ottumwa to "read" law in the office of a friend of his father, and he continued part-time with the insurance company. Charles was admitted to the Iowa Bar in 1932 and opened an office in Ottumwa, but still had time to continue to look for birds and give many birding talks. One spring he found nineteen species of warblers in Hamilton Park near his home during his lunch hour.

Wilbur Dole of Fairfield, knowing of Charles' keen interest in birds, invited him in 1941 to the Fairfield Bird Club meetings and to the Iowa Ornithologists' Union spring meeting at which Charles joined the I.O.U. Later that year Charles organized the Ottumwa Bird Club. At their annual business meeting on 24 May 1986 the Ottumwa Bird Club elected Charles president for the 46th consecutive time. Two inspired former members have organized bird clubs in Laurens and Centerville.

Charles' intense enthusiasm for birding and his knowledge of birds did not go unnoticed by I.O.U. members. He was elected president of I.O.U. in May 1946 and re-elected in 1947 and 1948. During his years as president, I.O.U. meetings were exceedingly popular and well-attended, and attracted many notable speakers. The first fall get-together was held on 21 September 1947 at the Fred Pierce home in Winthrop with 57 I.O.U. members present.

Charles' enthusiasm for his favorite subject, birds, resulted in numerous invitations to speak (over 1,000 engagements) to social and service clubs, churches, school classes, scouting groups, and bird clubs in the Ottumwa area and beyond (Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Arizona, and California). To illustrate the phenomenon of migration during his talks Charles prepared a series of maps for several species of birds. He punched small holes in the maps for the wintering areas and for the summer nesting areas. He then punched holes for the outer edges of the migration flyways. He pasted blue cellophane on the back of the map for wintering areas, pink for the nesting areas, and yellow for the edges of the migration paths. These maps were placed over a cardboard box fitted with light bulbs to show the information to his audiences. Charles says he still has the maps!

It was during one of these speaking engagements in 1952 that he met Darleen Pullins. Darleen was born in Council Grove, Kansas, and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Dietetics and Institutional Management from Kansas State University. She completed an internship at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota. She began her career as a dietician in a hospital in Kansas City and in 1948 accepted a position as dietician at St. Joseph Hospital in Ottumwa. While she was interested in the out-of-doors and nature, she didn't know very much about birds. One time she saw a picture of a vireo on an Arm and Hammer bird card and wondered if she would ever see one.

After the speaking engagement at St. Joseph Hospital, where they met, Charles and Darleen found they shared, among other things, an interest in nature. The couple attended the I.O.U. meeting in early May 1953 (chaperoned by Charles' longtime birder friend Pearle Walker). Later that month, on May 31, Charles and Darleen were married, and began a lifetime encouraging each other in their birding pursuits and the study of nature.



Charles has been a long-time member of the Ottumwa YMCA, and his primary activity there was volleyball. He was a star player on the Ottumwa Y team that won six state volleyball tournaments during the 1950s. During all of these years, as Charles continued his law practice, he was never so tied up with his legal profession that he couldn't be enticed away from his office by a telephone call to check out a strange bird. He became the "bird authority," and he is known personally or by reputation to everyone in the area.

With renewed interest of the Ottumwa Bird Club members in 1959, Charles and Darleen invited Conservation Officer Merle Jones of Estherville, a licensed Bird Bander, to come to Ottumwa to set up nets to give banding demonstrations. With Merle as one of his sponsors, Charles applied for a banding permit; a Master Banding permit was issued to Charles in 1960. Most of the Ayres' banding was done at Camp Arrowhead, the YWCA camp near Ottumwa. They have banded in excess of 60,000 individuals of 180 species of birds. Banding sessions have been enjoyed by bird club members, by school children in groups, and by adults of the community and surrounding area. Hundreds of people have been informed about birds, bird behavior, and migrations during the Ayres' banding operations. Darleen frequently incorporated her culinary talents by fixing breakfast for early morning birders.

Darleen returned to college at Northeast Missouri State and in 1961 received a Master's degree in Education. That fall she began teaching sixth graders at Horace Mann elementary school in Ottumwa.

Two teachers at Ottumwa's Fairfield and Jefferson elementary schools organized a one-day science camp at the Y Camp. They were able to get Charles and Darleen to conduct the bird study session as a part of their program. The science camp is now a two-day affair (overnight camp), and it includes all nine Ottumwa elementary schools. The Ayres plan to continue their participation by presenting bird study programs and banding demonstrations.

In 1965 Charles was appointed Municipal Court Judge for the city of Ottumwa and later an Associate District Court Judge. He continued this assignment until his retirement in 1975. In that same year Charles received the 1975 Iowa Academy of Science "Centennial Citation" for "Amateur Ornithology and Leader in the Iowa Ornithologists' Union."

Darleen was also active in the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. After serving on the Executive Council and as Vice-President, she was elected president in May 1973 and re-elected in 1974.

Darleen was presented the "1978 Teacher of the Year" award by the Iowa Academy of Science as recognition of her teaching elementary science. Her formal teaching and kindly encouragement were terminated with her retirement in June 1986. She will continue to be in touch with youngsters at the spring and fall science camps.

These amateur ornithologists plan to write articles about their intriguing observations. In the meantime they are pleased that some of their accumulated information has been included in Peterson's Field Guides, Lawry's Quantitative Analysis of Birds, and Bent's Life Histories of North American Birds. They take heart in the fact that several generations of birders acknowledge that their interest in birds was inspired by the Ayres.

*81 Woodshire Drive, Ottumwa, IA 52501*

# BIRDING SWEET MARSH

FRANCIS L. MOORE



Sweet Marsh is a 2,242-acre, state-owned public hunting area located in northeast Bremer County. The area was created by damming Plum Creek near its confluence with the Wapsipinicon River. The marsh is 27 miles north of Waterloo (take U.S. 63 and Iowa 93) and immediately northeast of the town of Tripoli (Tri-po-la, with a short i and a). In the fall and winter the area is heavily hunted for waterfowl and upland game.

Sweet Marsh contains a wide variety of habitats that are reached via roads from the south, east, and north. A series of dikes allows access to ponds, mud flats, marsh, and a variety of grassy, brushy, and wooded areas. Otherwise, the area is difficult to penetrate on foot. The Sweet Marsh area has yielded 260 species of birds. Mature riparian woods attract warblers (34 species), vireos (7 species), and flycatchers (9 species). The combined wooded and marshy habitat is good for diurnal raptors (15 species). The marsh with large areas of open water is often good for shorebirds (28 species), waterfowl (26 species), herons and ibis (11 species), and blackbirds (11 species). The miles of hedge and groves of conifers are good for buntings, sparrows, and finches (32 species).

Uncommon to rare birds that have been found at Sweet Marsh include Snowy Egret, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Goshawk, Swainson's Hawk, Ruffed Grouse, Yellow Rail, Sandhill Crane, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owl, Long-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Shrike, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Summer Tanager, and Lark Bunting.

In my experience, it is best to start at the south entrance and bird the area in a counter-clockwise fashion. The route described here involves a lot of walking and takes four to five hours if the birding is good, less if few birds are encountered. More birds will be found by starting early in the day. On the map, letters refer to dikes and numbers to birding locations described in the text.

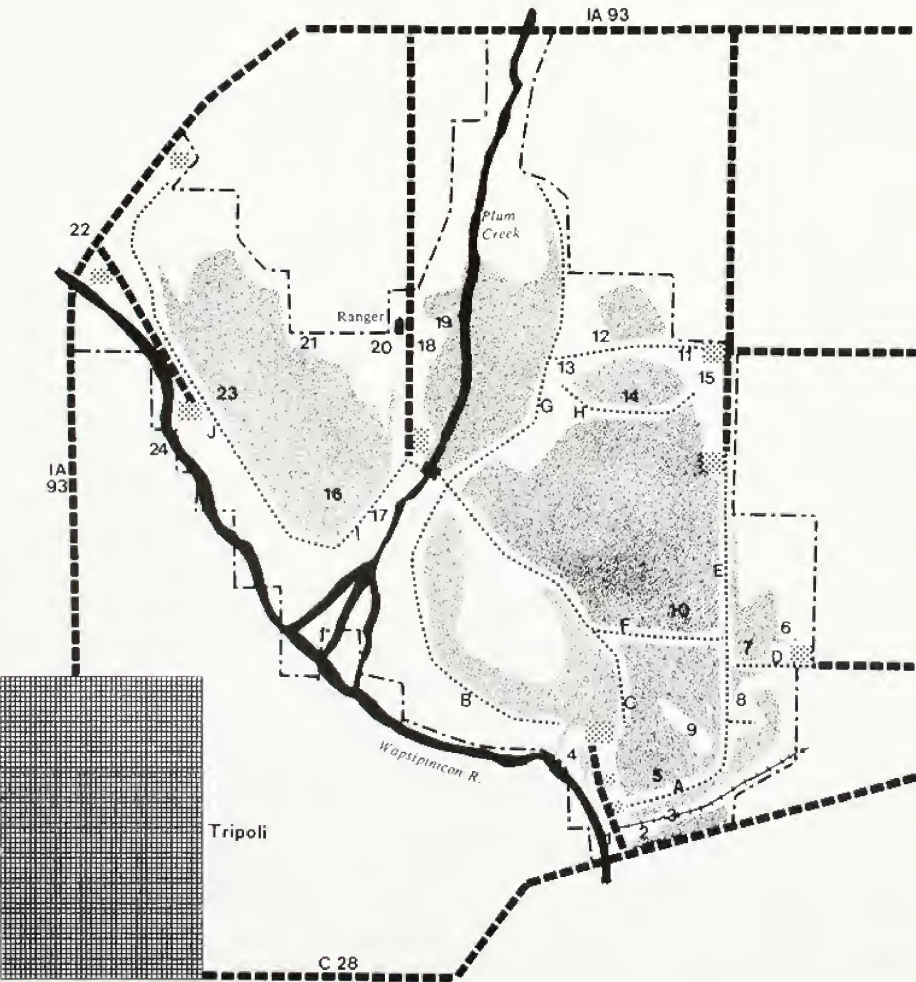
The south entrance is about 2 miles east of the southeast corner of Tripoli on C28, just east of the second bridge. Go north 50 yards, park, and bird the woods to the west (1) and east (2). A quick walk on the abandoned railroad bed (3) may be productive. Continue by driving north to the parking lots; bird the edges along the river (4) and along dike A. Open water to the north of dike A (5) is good for waterfowl. Continue to the large parking lot at the end of the road; from here you can bird either dike B or C for waterfowl, shorebirds, and raptors.

To reach the southeast access from the south entrance go 1 mile east on C28, 0.5 miles north on a gravel road, and 0.7 miles west on a dead end road. You can walk north from the parking lot to open field, hedge, and pine plantings (6) looking for sparrows, hawks, and owls. Dike D leads west from the parking lot along areas of open water and emergent vegetation (7) where moorhens and rails may lurk. From the west end of dike D, you can go south on dike A, north on dike E, or west on dike F. On the east side of dike A there is a clump of river birch (8) that is good for warblers, flycatchers, and sparrows. To the west there is open water with large dead trees (9) where raptors may sit. Dikes A, E, and F may be walked for a considerable



distance; the area west of dike E and north of dike F (10) is good for waterfowl in season.

To reach the northeast access, return to the north-south gravel road and go 1 mile north and 1 mile west to the parking lot. Walk west along a hedged path (11) watching for sparrows and flycatchers. The path continues through a cattail marsh (12), where rails and bitterns may be found, and then through oak/hickory woods (13) to dike G, a good place for warblers. After birding dike G, it is easiest to return on the path. Alternatively, go 20 yards south on the dike from the intersection of the dike and the path, and make your way southeast through the woods to dike H. The birding in this heavy undergrowth may be good, but it may be difficult to find dike H. On dike H, look for waterfowl to the north (14) and rails to the north and south. Dike H leads to a wood lot and pine grove (15), an excellent place for warblers and sparrows. A path on the west and north of the pines returns you to the parking lot.



To reach the north access from the northeast access go 1 mile north, 1 mile west on highway 93, and 1 mile south to the parking lot near the dam. Dike I, which is southeast of the parking lot, provides a good vantage point for viewing the open water (16) for waterfowl and herons and the sky for hawks. The woods to the southeast of dike I (17) may be searched for woodland species.

On the way in or out from the north access, the areas near the ranger station may be checked. Park on the road near the service buildings. A small wooded area to the east (18) may be good for warblers, and it contains a path leading to a small cattail slough (19). A service road that goes west from the building leads to hedge, pine, and deciduous plantings (20) where hawks, owls, sparrows, and crossbills may be encountered. At the end of the service road (21) the water areas are again in view, and sparrows may be found along the way.

Other areas that are not usually as good for birding might be checked if you have time. Areas on the northwest edge of the marsh (22, 23, 24) can be checked from parking lots off of highway 93 and from dike J. Newly added areas to the north of highway 93 might also be explored.

*336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703*

# IDENTIFICATION OF FIRST WINTER THAYER'S GULL

CARL J. BENDORF

In 1973 the American Ornithologists' Union separated Thayer's Gull from Herring Gull. As a result, birdwatchers have become more interested in the problem of field identification of this species.

Thayer's Gull nests in the Canadian Arctic and winters mainly on the West Coast. Most Midwest records are of first-winter birds, but adults also occur. Thayer's Gull is regularly found in small numbers along the Great Lakes and south to Alton Dam above St. Louis. Most are found at the same time as Herring Gulls, typically in late fall and winter. The best time in Iowa would be just before freeze-up or as the ice begins to break-up in late winter. The adult Thayer's Gull is adequately treated in recent field guides. This article will deal with the identification of first-winter Thayer's Gulls and is based on information in several recent references (Gosselin and David 1975, Lehman 1980, Eckert 1983, Harrison 1983, Zimmer 1985).

Structurally, Thayer's Gull is quite similar to Iceland Gull and adults may be difficult to distinguish from the Kumlien's race of the Iceland Gull. First-year Thayer's Gulls, however, are typically much darker than first-year Iceland Gulls and are easily separated from that species by their solid tail band. First-year Thayer's are quite similar to first-year Herring Gulls, and both can vary considerably in shade and size.

The standard warning in many references is that there is no one single field mark that will clearly indicate Thayer's Gull. However, the most important element in identification of first-winter Thayer's Gull is the wing pattern. The other field marks must be considered and checked, but identification begins with the pattern of the wings.








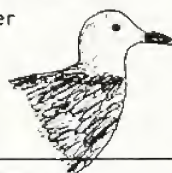




Herring Gulls in first-winter plumage always show a significant darkening of the primaries toward the tip of the wing. The upper wing surface of a first-winter Thayer's Gull should appear quite uniform without dark wing tips. On close examination, the inner primaries are a bit lighter than the rest of the wing, giving a subtle dark-light-dark pattern. The tips of the outer primaries may be slightly darker than the rest of the wing. If you notice dark wing tips or a dark trailing edge to the secondaries, you are probably looking at a Herring Gull.

The undersurface of the wing is most important in Thayer's Gull. In first-winter plumage the flight feathers (primaries and secondaries) are silvery-white, including the wing tips. The entire trailing edge including the wing tips must be uniform and light. The wing linings are brown and appear darker than the flight feathers. The whitish flight feathers on the underside of the wing should be visible under most lighting conditions, not just with back-lighting. A bird with darkening in the wing tips as seen from below is not a first-winter Thayer's Gull. Herring Gulls often show a light window at the inner primaries, but the wing tip is dark.

The average Thayer's Gull is slightly smaller than the average Herring Gull, but small Herring Gulls may be the same size as some Thayer's Gulls. Size alone cannot be used as a solid field mark; but it may help to pick out a possible Thayer's. The head of Thayer's Gull is generally rounded and dove-like. Herring Gulls generally have a flatter forehead. However, head shape is often subjective, and there is much individual variation among birds of both species. Head color in a Thayer's gull



# Comparison of First Winter Thayer's and Herring Gulls

Feature	Thayer's Gull	Herring Gull
Upper Wing	<p>relatively uniform slightly darker tips to primaries subtle dark-light-dark pattern</p> 	<p>much darker at tip dark trailing edge pale inner primaries</p> 
Under Wing	<p>silvery, translucent flight feathers</p> 	<p>dark outer primaries light inner primaries (window)</p> 
Upper Tail	<p>broad brown band matches body base of tail lighter</p> 	<p>broad blackish band darker than body</p> 
Head and Body	<p>same color often smudge through eye</p> 	<p>head often lighter</p> 
Head Shape	<p>tends to look rounded</p> 	<p>flat forehead</p> 
Bill Shape and Color	<p>short uniform width all black</p> 	<p>longer bulbous often all black</p> 
Eye	dark	dark
Legs and Feet	pink	pink

should not differ from that of the body. In the first and second winters, Herring Gulls vary greatly in overall color. If the head is lighter than the body the bird is probably a Herring Gull rather than a Thayer's.

Thayer's Gulls have proportionally short and delicate bills. The culmen (ridge of the upper mandible) is gradually curving; there is not much thickening toward the tip. Herring Gull has a longer bill that is bulged or angled toward the tip. From October through January the bill of a first-winter Thayer's should be all black, later the base may be lighter. First-winter Herrings will usually have a blackish bill that is paler at the base, but may appear all black.

Both Thayer's and Herring Gulls have dark eyes in their first winter. The legs and feet of Thayer's and Herring Gulls are pink, but in the first year the Thayer's may be darker pink.

Overall first-winter Thayer's are usually buffy-brown with lighter edgings to the back and covert feathers, giving the upper parts a mottled or marbled appearance. Some birds can be as dark overall as a Herring Gull, but usually they are a shade lighter. The coloration of Thayer's Gull is more uniform than that of the Herring Gull. On a sitting bird, the exposed primary tips of the folded wing are darker brown than the rest of the wing and back, but not blackish-brown as in the Herring Gull.

The tail of first-winter Thayer's Gull is uniform brown with only a little mottling at the base of the outer tail feathers. The tail color is of the same quality of brown as the rest of the bird, but may be a shade darker. It should not have a blackish tone as is present on first-winter Herrings.

In summary, concentrations of Herring Gulls should be checked for possible Thayer's Gulls. Caution should be used in separating the two species. In first-winter plumage, the wing pattern of Thayer's is clearly different from Herring and is the most important field mark. The other supporting characteristics are subject to variation, and are important, but usually not conclusive. Further, these field marks are subjective and vary with viewing angle and lighting. Experience is needed to judge many of the field marks. Practice in aging Herring Gulls and studying the variation in first-year birds may help when a first-winter Thayer's Gull happens by.

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# JUST CALL THEM ALL SEA GULLS

BARBARA L. WILSON

Recently the I.O.U. Records Committee has been deluged (well, showered, anyway) with documentations of gulls, well-written by sincere people suffering from the delusion that gulls can be identified. This article is written to dispel that notion.

That such a delusion should exist is not surprising. It is fostered by field guides that point out seemingly simple differences between the gulls. As we birders gain experience we find deficiencies in these descriptions. Most guides feature only two immature plumages, for example, although some gulls have as many as four immature stages, not to mention the unclassifiable appearance of molting birds. Nor do the guides deal with the effects of feather wear, lighting problems, individual variation, or hybridization.

Disillusioned by gulls that do not match the field guides, many birders have realized that gull identification is impossible. Some, however, feel the problem lies with the guides rather than the birds, and so a long series of identification articles has appeared in print (Binford 1978, Gosselin and David 1975, Hume 1975, Lauro and Spencer 1980, Lehman 1980), culminating in a book on gulls (Grant 1982). This slim and expensive volume contains more information about gull identification than any sane person could ever want to know.

Identifying gulls is difficult because many are extremely similar. Particularly uniform are the large white-headed gulls (e.g. Herring, Ring-billed, Glaucous, Black-backed), the ones that I particularly want to write about. Many of the similarities are obvious—any non-birder can recognize them all as sea gulls—but the likeness is not just superficial. These birds are surprisingly similar in behavior (Moynihan 1959, Tinbergen 1953), protein structure (Perkins 1964, Sibley and Ahlquist 1972), and body structure (Schnell 1970a, 1970b). Since the birds are so similar, humans (and even the gulls themselves—see below) are confused about the limits of species. When species differences are subtle, feather wear, molt, age, individual variation, even tricks of lighting, can easily make one gull look like a member of a different species.

Since identification involves labeling a bird as a member of some species, it is necessary to define that term before going any further. Originally a "species" meant a group of living things that looked alike. An immediate problem arose: Linnaeus himself originally classified male and female Mallards as members of different species, since they look quite different. This little problem was quickly solved, and now we consider things to be members of one species if they normally breed together in nature to produce fertile offspring. The qualifications "normally," "in nature," and "to produce fertile offspring" were needed to avoid confusion caused by mules, Brewster's Warblers, and other hybrids.

The lusty, fruitful gulls, however, are unconcerned with our definitions. Particularly among the large white-headed gulls we find a profusion of relationships that defies our attempts at classification. All of these gulls can hybridize and most of them do, at least occasionally. The offspring are fertile. At one location a species may use the most subtle clues to recognize and mate with only its own kind, and yet in another area it may mate readily with a gull species even humans can recognize immediately as different. There are even cases of white-headed gulls mating with black-headed gulls (Weseloh and Mineau 1986).



What's going on here? One point worth noting is that in this century gulls are expanding their populations and ranges. A variety of species that now share breeding colonies previously never met during the breeding season. Therefore errors in mate selection are easy for them to make. Further, each gull species used to forage in its own special way, and a confused hybrid gull would die, unable to forage well by using either of the parental foraging methods. Now all gulls eat garbage, and hybrids have a good chance of surviving. It could be that there are more gull species now than there will be in a couple of centuries when the gull situation stabilizes.

Now I would like to present a few of these intricacies of gull taxonomy. I will start with the worst case, the Herring, Thayer's, and Iceland Gulls. Smith (1966) studied these gulls near Baffin Island. They are all reproductively isolated from one another. Herring Gulls have light eyes, Thayer's Gulls have moderately to very dark eyes, and they tell one another apart by eye color. Kumlien's Iceland Gull has variable eyes. When Thayer's and Kumlien's share breeding colonies, Kumlien's has very light eyes and Thayer's very dark ones. When they are separate, however, both have moderately brown eyes.

This would not matter much to humans except that darkness of eyes and of wings is under control of the same genes. Dark-eyed Thayer's and Kumlien's Gulls have the darkest wing tips of their respective species, and the lighter-eyed birds have paler wing tips. Both species are highly variable; the variation carries back into immature plumages, and so we find them hard to tell apart. Typical Iceland Gulls (found mainly in Eurasia) have pure white primaries and are easy to tell from Herring Gulls, but Kumlien's Iceland Gull (with gray in the wing tip) can look like either typical Iceland Gulls or Thayer's Gull. Thayer's in turn can resemble Kumlien's or Herring Gulls. A lot has been written on how to identify these birds (Gosselin and David 1975, Grant 1982, Lehman 1980, and numerous shorter notes), but now you know why not to try.

By the way, some researchers believe that typical Iceland's, Kumlien's, and Thayer's Gulls may all be members of a single species. Kumlien's and typical Iceland's can interbreed, and it is thought that Thayer's and typical Iceland's may interbreed too, although Kumlien's and Thayer's do not. This all sounds interesting, but I am not sure I want to know any more about it.

Thayer's Gulls migrate from the breeding grounds in northeast Canada to wintering grounds on the Pacific coast. Some birds, mostly immatures, show up on the Atlantic coast and in the Midwest. For decades these young Thayer's confused gull taxonomists. Ornithologists were not too familiar with the arctic gull colonies and did not follow individual immature birds through their many plumage changes. (See Sutton and Parmelee 1978 for what may be the first detailed description of known young Thayer's Gulls.) Gulls were found in the south and labeled as belonging to some particular species, to which they might or might not really belong. This actually made gulls a bit easier to identify, since a species, as defined, consisted only of similar gulls, and all similar gulls were put in a single species. This just did not happen to be true, and now we have researched ourselves into the impossibility of naming young gulls.

Out on the west coast, the unidentifiable Thayer's Gull winters in a swarm of unidentifiable Pacific gulls of hybrid origin. Better birders than I have cautioned about the difficulty of identifying gulls out there (Mark 1981).

Glaucous-winged and Western Gulls hybridize extensively in Washington. Some colonies contain over 50 percent hybrids—F1 hybrids, F2 hybrids, backcrosses, and introgrades. As a result, it may seem obvious that the birds are all members of a

single species. Scientists have doubts about that, however, because the area of hybridization is not increasing, and nearby colonies have pure Glaucous-winged or Western Gulls. Careful observation reveals that each gull prefers to mate with gulls similar in appearance to itself (and therefore to its parents). This preference seems to keep hybridization from completely merging these two forms (Hoffman, Wiens, and Scott 1978).

Cases like this have caused researchers in theoretical population genetics (e.g., Moore 1977) to try to answer the question, "How much exchange of genetic material (successful hybridization) has to occur before two forms should be considered to be a single species?" Their answers have led to the splitting of the sapsuckers and Western Grebes, and maintenance of Western and Glaucous-winged Gulls as separate (although it has also led to the infamous merger of orioles and others).

Speaking of Western Gulls, this group has recently been recognized as consisting of two separate species, the Western Gull with pink legs and a southern form aptly called the Yellow-footed Gull.

Confusion exists in gulls as well as their observers. Researchers studying a Western Gull colony off San Francisco were surprised to discover a female-female pair there. Then they were more surprised to discover lots of such homosexual pairs (Hunt and Hunt 1977). After the obligatory jokes about the appropriate location for this discovery, many ornithologists settled down to find an explanation. There seems to be a shortage of males in the colony (why?), so some females have to pair up with another female or not nest at all. Since gulls are not completely faithful to their mates, these gulls do sometimes lay fertile eggs. A lone gull cannot raise young since the neighbors would eat the eggs or chicks while the parent was away feeding, but female-female pairs sometimes succeed.

Since this discovery among Western Gulls, other researchers have examined their gulls more closely and found that female-female pairs occur in most species studied (Conover, Miller, and Hunt 1979, Fitch 1979). As an example of the degree of confusion possible in gulls, a pair consisting of a female Ring-billed and a female Laughing Gull was found near Lake Erie (Weseloh and Mineau 1986).

To return to Glaucous-winged Gulls, these indiscriminate birds are involved in hybridization at both ends of their range. They hybridize extensively with Herring Gulls in southern Alaska, and a whole range of variation is seen in gulls of this area (Patten and Weisbrod 1974, Williamson and Peyton 1963). As a result, some European gull observers consider Glaucous-winged a pale subspecies of Herring Gull, but Americans, mindful of the situation with Western Gulls (and mindful of their life lists?), feel it is best to wait for further study.

In Alaska the Glaucous Gulls are a bit small, may show a bit of gray in the primaries, and sometimes have atypical dark eyes (Strang 1977). This may be the result of past or continuing hybridization with those good old Glaucous-winged Gulls.

As it happens, the smallest female Glaucous Gulls are the size of the largest male Iceland Gulls. There are subtle differences in proportions and bill color, but the fact is that it is impossible to tell a very small Glaucous from an Iceland under most conditions (Grant 1982, Hume 1975, Janssen 1979).

At least Glaucous and Herring Gulls seem to be quite distinct. Their ranges overlap, and yet they do not normally interbreed. They differ in size (usually) and in color, and anybody can tell them apart—except in Iceland. For centuries Glaucous Gulls lived in Iceland, and Herring Gulls did not. Then the British race of the Herring Gull (which for centuries had not seen a Glaucous Gull during the breeding



season) invaded Iceland. The two species hit it off right away, and now Iceland is full of mongrel gulls, mostly unidentifiable (Ingolfsson 1970). This causes endless headaches for taxonomists. What do you do with two forms that are clearly distinct species except where they aren't?

The Herring Gull is involved in lots of gull controversies. The classic is its relationship with the Lesser Black-backed Gull (various sources, including Barth 1968, Brown 1967, Meinertzhagen 1935). In Britain and parts of northern Europe these forms live together without hybridizing. Well, almost without hybridizing. Natural hybridization is rare, but has occurred (Tinbergen 1953). When some researchers shifted Herring Gull eggs to Lesser Black-backed nests and vice versa, they were happy to learn that these gulls grow up to prefer mates that looked like their foster parents (Harris 1970). In the succeeding years these gulls and their hybrid descendants continued to confuse birders.

Normally, however, the species are distinct. The Herring Gull's range extends west from Europe across North America and into Siberia. The Lesser Black-backed's range extends east across northern Europe and into Siberia. In Siberia we find a population of intermediate appearance called *taimyrensis*. This group has been tossed about like a hot potato, now put into Herring Gulls, now tucked into the Lesser Black-backed, often dropped on the excuse that further research is needed. It is generally, but not unanimously, agreed that this form originated from the hybridization of populations of both these gulls. So here we have what might be considered a single species found throughout the northern hemisphere, joined all across Siberia, and with the two populations at each end overlapping in Europe without interbreeding. What do you call that? Should Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls be considered one species?

Do you recall the Slaty-backed Gull that enlivened a recent winter by spending a few months in St. Louis? Excited birders from all over the continent rushed to St. Louis to add this species to their life lists. Let us hope they do not have to remove it again. This gull breeds on the western rim of the Pacific. In parts of Siberia its range overlaps that of the Herring Gull, and a Soviet researcher (Portenko 1963) reports that hybridization is so extensive that he feels the two forms are a single species. Others feel more research is needed.

Hard as it is to believe, the Herring Gull has actually been split off from one gull population, according to some researchers (Devillers 1983). As in the case of Western Gulls, there is a southern form of Herring Gull with yellow legs, and this Mediterranean population is now considered a separate species, the Yellow-legged Gull. It is possible that one of these birds showed up in Quebec in 1973, but the specimen may be a Herring x Lesser Black-backed hybrid (Gosselin, David, and Laporte 1986). Even in the hand it is not possible to distinguish between the Yellow-legged Gull and this type of hybrid.

I have mentioned several hybrids involving our large white-headed gulls, but there are more. For example: Herring x Greater Black-backed (Andrle 1972, Godfrey 1973, Gray 1958, Jehl 1960), Herring x Common Black-headed in captivity (Gray 1958), Herring x Thayer's (Smith 1966, one mixed pair out of nearly 4,500 pairs examined), Mew x Iceland and x Common Black-headed, both in captivity (Gray 1958), Lesser Black-backed x Iceland, Glaucous, and Common Black-headed, all in captivity (Gray 1958), Iceland x Glaucous (Gray 1958), Glaucous x Greater Black-backed in captivity (Gray 1958), Glaucous x Thayer's (Smith 1966, experimentally induced hybridization in the wild), Ring-billed x Common Black-backed (Weseloh and Mineau 1986), and Ring-billed x Franklin's (Weseloh 1981).



With all this hybridization it is clear that the limits of gull species are often a mystery even to the gulls themselves. If hybridization is not enough, there is always the problem of individual variation to make gull identification impossible. I have mentioned the overlapping variation in Kumlien's Iceland and Thayer's Gull. Even experts admit that these two gulls cannot always be separated in the field (Lehman 1980). Darker young Thayer's and Herring Gulls are so similar that photos may not always be adequate to distinguish between them (Gosselin and David 1975), although we still try. As mentioned, small Glaucous Gulls may occasionally overlap Iceland Gulls in size. There is an instructive article on albino and abnormally pale Herring Gulls and the confusion they can cause in identifying white-winged gulls like Iceland (Hedgren and Larsson 1973). Do not be put off by the fact that it is written in Finnish; with gulls that may be just as well, and anyway there are English captions under the pictures and an English summary.

So what to do about gulls? There are really just two choices. You can copy all the articles, buy Grant's fine book, get a powerful telescope, study the effect of lighting on the shades of gray in gull backs, and go slowly crazy. Or you can just call them all sea gulls and enjoy the grace of their flight. If desperate birders madly insist you stare at gulls, do so politely, nod agreement, and point out that definitive identification must "await further research."

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# EASTERN SCREECH-OWL SURVEY IN MILLS COUNTY

JEANNE-MARIE BAKEHOUSE

Eastern Screech-Owl (*Otus asio*) is difficult to census, and its frequency has not been studied in southwest Iowa. I set out with the help of Barbara Wilson to find the owl's preference among the three wooded habitats of the area.



To find the Screech-Owls, a tape of their song was played. I obtained the call from National Geographic *Water Prey and Game Birds* and played it for five minutes in the pattern of five seconds for pausing and 10 seconds for calling. The tape player was placed on the car, and the observers walked some distance away in order to hear more clearly. I visited areas in Silver Creek, Indian Creek, Anderson, Ingraham, and Center townships in northeast Mills County. Each site was visited once.

Surveys were done on clear or partly cloudy nights with light winds. On some nights there was a full moon. Trials were run on five nights between 24 February and 28 March 1986.

Habitats sampled were: (1) urban—small towns (population 200-300) with large trees; (2) mixed riparian—wooded stream or river dominated by willow (*Salix sp*), cottonwood (*Populus sp*), box elder (*Acer negundo*), and silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*); and (3) upland woods—5-60 acre oak (*Quercus sp*) woods. Sites were picked in daylight prior to the nocturnal survey.

The results of the census are presented in Table 1. There were no significant differences in the frequency of responses among habitats.

Table 1. Frequency and Number of Eastern Screech-Owls by Habitat

Habitat	Sites	Sites with Owls	Number of Owls
Urban	9	1	2
Mixed Riparian	14	2	1, 1
Upland Woods	8	2	3, 2

Eastern Screech-Owls are difficult to find in southwest Iowa, since owls were detected on only 15 percent of the trials. When looking for Screech-Owls in Mills County, one wooded habitat seems to be as good as any other.

Rt. 1, Hastings, IA 51540



# FIELD REPORTS—SPRING 1986

ROBERT K. MYERS

## WEATHER

Spring 1986 was again a "mixed bag" of weather phenomena. March kicked off a unique spring with its above-normal temperatures, which made it one of the warmest March periods in the last forty years. Temperatures averaging 88° across Iowa on 29 March made this date the warmest March day on record. Some precipitation at mid-month caused minor flooding and high waters, particularly along the Little Sioux, Floyd, Racoon, Upper Des Moines, Cedar, and Wapsipinicon Rivers. Late month, however, was generally sunny, windy and dry.



March was followed by two months of warm, wet weather. April averaged 4° warmer than normal, and precipitation exceeded the statewide normal by 42 percent. Precipitation varied widely across the state with the southwest and westcentral areas very wet and southeast quite dry. Northwest Iowa measured 235 percent above normal precipitation!

April was unseasonably warm at the beginning and the end of the month, with more nearly average temperatures at mid-month. Because of the relatively wet, mild March and early April, vegetation was advanced one or two weeks. The pattern followed that of Spring 1985. Although there was some freezing cold, windy, snowy weather on 14-15 April, the month ended with high temperatures of 85° at Keokuk and 92° at Burlington and Belle Plaine on the 25th. April precipitation varied from 1.53 inches at Keokuk to 9.74 inches at Oakland. Precipitation in measurable amounts was reported on 15 days at most Iowa localities. The month ended with heavy rains on the 30th over Des Moines and central Iowa. Flooding occurred in some areas followed this storm.

May can only be described as "soggy." Although the final official statistics are not complete, the state climatology office suspected that the record of 8.72 inches in 1892 could well be exceeded in May 1986. By mid-month the normal rainfall for May had been exceeded in many areas. Central and southcentral Iowa seemed to be collecting the most water, while heavy rains in southeast caused minor flooding and much standing water in fields.

All of this wet, warm weather certainly did influence birding. Many trees were early to leaf-out this year, causing problems in finding what warblers were there. The excessive rainfall in most cases flooded out many of the traditional shorebirding spots. These wet conditions did, however, turn many fields and river floodplains into excellent shorebird habitat. (Weather data prepared by Jim Sandrock.)

## GENERAL TRENDS

The spring migration could basically be described as "hit and miss." Shorebird habitat was so plentiful in some areas that it was difficult to find concentrations of birds. Likewise, movements of passerines, especially warblers, were very localized. Some central and eastern Iowa areas had very good numbers, particularly between 9 and 12 May. Francis Moore found 30 species of warblers in the Sweet Marsh area on 10 May. Other areas, however, produced very few species.

Some species also were conspicuous by their absence. Herons, of all species, were down in numbers reported. Some hawks, such as broad-winged hawks, were hardly reported at all.

Some Iowa birders have done very well this year. For example, Steve Dinsmore had his 1986 Iowa list up to 264 species by the end of May with over 220 of those species being found during the spring period (1 March-31 May).

## UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

In spite of what might be called a "so-so" spring migration there were some interesting birds found. Accidental species reported include Clark's Grebe, Lazuli Bunting, and Western Tanager. Casual species included White-faced Ibis, Surf Scoter, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Bewick's Wren, Townsend's Solitaire, Chestnut-collared Longspur, House Finch, and Great-tailed Grackle. Some rare but regular species that were reported include Red-necked Grebe, Snowy Egret, White-winged Scoter, Yellow Rail, King Rail, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Pine Warbler, and Smith's Longspur. The "where did it come from?" list includes reports of a Chukar and a Gambel's Quail.

## SPECIES DATA

Documented sightings are indicated by an "\*". In the species accounts, "record earliest" (or "latest") is used in reference to the date published in *Iowa Birds* or a more recent record date; "early" (or "late") means earlier (or later) than the third earliest (or latest) date in *Iowa Birds*; and "first" (or "last") is relative to the current year—not a record date.

**Common Loon:** 1 on 25 Mar at Big Creek S.P. (SD) is the third earliest. Others were early on 28 Mar at Saylorville Res. (SD), 29 Mar at Little Wall L. (SD), and 30 Mar in Boone Co. (SD). The peak was 5 on 10 Apr at Little Wall L. (SD) and 15 Apr at Big Creek S.P. (SD). The last report was 1 on 31 May at Hendrickson M. (HZ).

**Pied-billed Grebe:** The first was 1 on 13 Mar in Boone Co. (EM).

**Horned Grebe:** 1 on 19 Mar at Tama (\*NAK) tied the second early date. Others were early on 23 Mar in Appanoose Co. (RLC) and 26 Mar at Little Wall L. (SD). The peak was 14 on 3 Apr at Little Wall L. (SD). One on 24 May in Louisa Co. (PCP) is the third latest.

**Red-necked Grebe:** 2 on 1 May were at Little Wall L. (\*SD, \*MPr).

**Eared Grebe:** A record early bird was at L. Manawa on 14 Mar (SD). The peak was 14 on 10 May at Willow Sl. (BLW). All reports were from C and W Iowa except for 2 on 12 Apr at Sweet M. (FLM).

**Western Grebe:** 1 on 28 Apr at Rathbun Res. (RLC) and 1 on 18 May at Blue L., Monona Co. (SD).

**Clark's Grebe:** 3 at Hendrickson M. on 30 May had white surrounding the eye (\*SD, \*PM).

**American White Pelican:** 14 on 15 Mar at Red Rock Res. (MPr, BPr) set a third early date. Peaks were 795 on 5 Apr at Brown's L., Woodbury Co. (BH) and 700 on 11 Apr at Saylorville Res. (SD). The only E Iowa report was 32 on 19 Apr in Appanoose Co. (RLC).

**Double-crested Cormorant:** 1 on 14 Mar in Ringgold Co. (SD) set a new early date. Peak was 150 on 19 Apr in Iowa City (THK). An immature was late on 31 May at Hendrickson M. (HZ).



- American Bittern:** 14 reports were received covering 10 counties. The first was seen on 11 Apr at Cone M. (JF). The peak was 8 on 10 May at Big Wall L. (SD, EM).
- Least Bittern:** Singles were listed in 8 reports, all in May. One on 1 May at Anderson L. (SD) is the third earliest.
- Great Blue Heron:** 1 on 16 Mar at Brown's L. (BH) was the first. The peak was 40 on 10 May at Coralville Res. (THK). Many observers remarked about low numbers this spring.
- Great Egret:** The first was on 30 Mar at Coralville Res. (TJS). Of only 7 reports received all were singles except for 3 in early Apr in Sioux Co. (JV) and 5 on 4 Apr at Brown's L. (BH).
- Snowy Egret:** 1 was seen at IPL Ponds on 31 May (\*BLW). Details were supplied for another on 29 May near Polk City (SD).
- Little Blue Heron:** 3 were in Webster Co. on 6 May (SD), and 1 imm. was at the Cherokee Airport on 11 May (DBi).
- Cattle Egret:** 4 on 5 Apr in Appanoose Co. (RLC) were the first. Several groups of 6 to 8 birds were seen around the state in late Apr and early May. The largest number was 20 on 10 May at Forney L. (BLW).
- Black-crowned Night-Heron:** 7 on 17 Mar at Bacon Creek P., Sioux City (BH) are the earliest on record. Most reports were from 12 to 19 Apr with peak of 15 on 19 Apr at Goose L., Greene Co. (SD).
- Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** All reports: 1 on 18 Apr in Cherokee Co. (DBi, MMB), 1 on 22 Apr in Polk Co. (DDM), 1 on 26 Apr at Coralville Res. (THK, TJS), 2 on 12 May at Sweet Marsh (RKM), 2 on 13 May at Riverton A. (THK, et. al.), 1 on 24 May in Louisa Co. (PCP), and 1 on 30 May in Louisa Co. (PCP).
- Ibis species:** 1 at Riverton A. on 6 Apr (Carl Priebe fide BLW) set a record early date; 1 on 13 Apr at Forney L. (Steve Matherly fide BP<sub>a</sub>) was the second earliest. Others were 1 on 11 May at Cone M. (\*TLD) and 1 was also at Louisa Unit Mark Twain N.W.R. on 20 May (Chet McCarty fide PCP).
- White-faced Ibis:** 2 were early at Snake Creek M. on 23 Apr (\*RKM); 1 was at Cherokee Airport on 29 May (\*MMB, \*DBi). The peak number of 6 was found on 20 May in Dickinson Co. (SD, JJD, details). These could be nesting.
- Tundra Swan:** 1 on 6 Mar at Saylorville Res. (SD) is the third earliest record; 1 was at Cone M. on 15 Mar and stayed to 27 Mar (THK, TJS, JF).
- Mute Swan:** None reported.
- Greater White-fronted Goose:** The first was on 9 Mar at Willow Sl. (BLW). The peak was 500 on 9 Mar at Forney L. (BP<sub>a</sub>, LP<sub>a</sub>). Most reports were from W Iowa with only Tama and Appanoose counties supplying eastern records. One was late on 20 May at Forney L. (JF).
- Snow Goose:** 2,000 were at Mark Twain N.W.R. on 9 Mar (TJS); the peak was 17,200 on 23 Mar at Snyder Bend, Woodbury Co. (BH); 1 was still in Lyon Co. on 20 May (SD).
- Ross' Goose:** Reports included 2 on 9 Mar at Rathbun Res. (RLC), 2 to 6 from 9 Mar to 13 Apr at IPL Ponds (BP<sub>a</sub>, et al.), and up to 13 on 14-15 Mar at Forney L. (SD).
- Canada Goose:** Peaks were 3,000 on 9 Mar (TJS) at Mark Twain N.W.R. and 3,000 on 11 Mar in Lee Co. (RCe).
- Wood Duck:** 40 on 10 Mar at Princeton M. (PCP) were a large number for so early.
- Green-winged Teal:** The first was at Willow Sl. on 9 Mar (BLW); the peak was 1,500 on 28 Mar at Riverton A. (RCe, FLM).

- American Black Duck:** 5 were at Bays Branch on 15 Mar (SD).
- Northern Pintail:** First report was 3 Mar at Willow Sl. (BLW).
- Blue-winged Teal:** The first were 2 on 9 Mar at Mark Twain N.W.R. (TJS) and 4 on 11 Mar at Montrose (RCe).
- Cinnamon Teal:** Single males were at Keg L., Mills Co., on 28 Mar (RCe, FLM), Anderson L. on 31 Mar (\*JJD, \*SD, BPr, MPr), and New L., Woodbury Co., on 7 Apr (\*BH).
- Canvasback:** Peak was 840 on 23 Mar at Bays Branch (SD). On 10 May 2 pair were still present at Morse L., Wright Co. (EM), and 2 pair were in Palo Alto Co. on 21 May (SD).
- Redhead:** The first were 7 on 9 Mar near Montrose (RCe); 2 pair were still at Morse L. on 10 May (EM).
- Ring-necked Duck:** Peak was 1,500 at Riverton A. on 14 Mar (SD).
- Greater Scaup:** There were 11 reports from across the state; 5 were early on 3 Mar at Willow Sl. (BLW, details). Most reports gave details. Documented birds included 1 on 15 Mar at Red Rock Res. (\*MPr), 2 on 19 Mar near Marshalltown (\*MPr), and 1 on 23 Mar at Coralville Res. (\*THK).
- Lesser Scaup:** Peak was an incredible 30,000 at Keokuk Pool on 4 Mar (RCe).
- Oldsquaw:** 1 was at L. Manawa on 15, 16 Mar (\*BPa, \*SD, LPa, TB).
- Surf Scoter:** Two reports: 1 on 14 Mar at L. Manawa (\*SD) and 1 on 15 May at Princeton M. (\*PCP).
- White-winged Scoter:** 1 imm. male was photographed on 15 May at Princeton M. (PCP, m.ob.).
- Common Goldeneye:** 1 male was still at Dunbar Sl. at the end of May (SD).
- Bufflehead:** 2 were late on 10 May at Dunbar Sl. (SD), but 2 at Blue L. on 18 May (SD) set a record late date.
- Hooded Merganser:** 9 on 8 Mar in Appanoose Co. (RLC) are the third earliest. Peaks were 20 on 17 Mar at the IPL Ponds (BPa, LPa) and 20 on 23 Mar at Swan L., Johnson Co. (THK, TJS).
- Common Merganser:** Peak was 400 at L. Manawa on 3 Mar (TB). One at Big Creek S.P. on 23 May (SD) is a record late date.
- Red-breasted Merganser:** Peaks were 30 on 17 Mar at L. Manawa (B. J. Rose fide BPa) and 95 on 23 Mar at Saylorsville Res. (SD).
- Ruddy Duck:** Peak was 70 on 28 Mar at Hendrickson M. (PM).
- Turkey Vulture:** 1 on 9 Mar at Red Rock Res. (MPr, BPr) and 2 at Mark Twain N.W.R. (TJS) were early.



*White-winged Scoter, Princeton M., 20 May 1986. Photos by Doug Rose.*



- Osprey:** 10 reports were received from C and E Iowa; all were singles except for 3 on 19 Apr at Big Creek S.P. (SD).
- Bald Eagle:** Peaks were 54 on 15 Mar at Red Rock Res. (MPr) and 40 at Rathbun Res. on 15 Mar (RLC). An adult reported on 14 May at L. Odessa (EC) is a record late date for a migrant.
- Northern Harrier:** Peak was 7 on 12 Apr in NC Iowa (SD). A pair was still in Plymouth Co. on 19 May (SD) and at Hayden Prairie on 31 May (FLM).
- Cooper's Hawk:** 11 were reported from 6 counties with a peak of 3 on 5 Apr in Guthrie Co. (SD) and in Appanoose Co. (RLC).
- Northern Goshawk:** Singles were at Mann Wilderness, Hardin Co., on 1 Mar (\*MPr), on 3 Mar at Coralville Res. (\*TJS), and at Swiss Valley, Dubuque Co., on 8 Mar (FLM).
- Red-shouldered Hawk:** All reports: 1 on 1 Mar at Wildcat Den S.P. (TLD); 1 on 3 Mar at Coralville Res. (TJS); 8 on 9 Mar along Mississippi Riv. in Louisa Co. (TJS); 2 on 9 May at Wildcat Den S.P. (TLD); 1 on 10 May w. of Minburn (SD, EM), and 1 on 20 May in NC Muscatine Co. (TLD).
- Broad-winged Hawk:** No large flocks were reported.
- Swainson's Hawk:** 13 were reported mostly from C and W Iowa. A pair were building a nest on 22 Apr in Osceola Co. (DBi, MMB, JF) in the same spot they have nested for eight years. On 3 May a pair was building a nest in George Wyth S.P. (FLM) for the only E Iowa sighting.
- Rough-legged Hawk:** Peak was 5 on 1 Mar in Hardin Co. (MPr). The last was 1 on 17 Apr in Boone Co. (SD).
- Golden Eagle:** 4 were reported: 1 imm. on 9 Mar was at Ledges S.P. (SD); 1 imm. near New Albin on 15 Mar (RKM, FLM); 1 imm. at Rathbun Res. on 20 Mar (\*MAH); and 1 at Forney L. on 28 Mar (\*RCe, FLM).
- American Kestrel:** 7 were seen in Tama Co. on 23 Mar (NAK); 3 of 7 nest boxes were used in Cherokee Co. (DBi).
- Merlin:** Reports included 1 on 14 Mar in Taylor Co. (SD), 1 on 28 Mar at Coralville Res. (JF), and 1 on 29 Mar at Big Wall L. (SD).
- Peregrine Falcon:** The following were reported: 1 on 20 Mar at Saylorville Res. (\*SD), 1 near Council Bluffs 4 Apr (\*JT), 1 on 17 Apr near McCausland (Gil Sandwich fide PCP), 1 on 23 Apr in Boone Co. (\*MPr, \*BPr), 1 at Lakin Sl. on 26 Apr (SD), 1 on 2 May at Bays Branch (SD), and 1 on 9 May at Coralville Res. (JF).
- Ruffed Grouse:** 1 on 11 May in S Van Buren Co. (JPS).
- Chukar:** 1 seen on 24 May near Lenox (Rosemary Dougherty fide BLW) must have escaped from some place.
- Wild Turkey:** On 18 May a female was found on nest with 12 eggs in Springbrook S.P. (JSi).
- Gambel's Quail:** 1 was roaming a residential area in Waterloo in late May (FLM). A breeder must be short one bird.
- Northern Bobwhite:** This species was noted in more locations than usual in Johnson Co. (THK). Two reports from NW Iowa include several calling on 2 May in Sioux Co. (JV) and a pair on 19 May in Plymouth Co. (SD).
- Yellow Rail:** All reports: 1 on 19 Apr near Rathbun Res. (Roger Sedlacek fide JJD, no details); 1 on 21 Apr in Hamilton Co. (EM, SD, details); 1 on 27 Apr at Doolittle Prairie (John Mayfield fide JJD, no details); 1 on 3 May at Snake Creek M (\*RKM); 1 on 7 May at Doolittle Prairie (\*PM).
- King Rail:** 1 was observed on 1 May at Cone M. (\*TLD); 1 answered a tape in Hamilton Co. on 10 May (SD, EM); and 1 was seen at Princeton M. on 19 May (Doug Rose fide PCP).

- Virginia Rail:** 1 on 19 Apr at Goose L., Greene Co. (SD) was early. Peak was 11 in Hamilton Co. on 3 May (SD).
- Sora:** 1 on 4 Apr at Doolittle Prairie (SD) ties the record early date. Peak was 53 in Hamilton Co. on 3 May (SD).
- Common Moorhen:** 1 on 21 Apr (second early date) at L. Cornelia, Wright Co. (Ken Hawley fide HZ); 1 on 9 May at Willow Sl. (BLW); 1 on 18 May at Dunbar Sl. (IOU field trip—m.ob); and peak of 17 on 26 May at Big Wall L. (SD).
- American Coot:** The first was on 3 Mar at IPL Ponds (BLW).
- Sandhill Crane:** 20 on 9 Mar in Scott Co. (Bill Barker fide THK) are the third earliest. Others were 3 in Fremont Co. on 15 Mar (\*SD), 1 near New Albin on 30 Mar (\*RZ), and 1 over Indianola on 6 Apr (JSi).
- Black-bellied Plover:** Quite a few May reports were received from C Iowa, usually of 6 or fewer birds. Peak was 14 on 20 May at Colo Ponds (MPR).
- Lesser Golden-Plover:** The first was 1 on 25 Mar at Big Creek (SD). Peak was 400 in Guthrie Co. on 26 Apr (SD). Observers in west (JC) and east (PCP) remarked on large movement. The last was 1 on 30 May at Polk City (SD).
- Semipalmated Plover:** 1 was early on 19 Apr at Big Creek S.P. (SD); 1 was still at Colo Ponds on 30 May (SD).
- Piping Plover:** 6 nests were found at the usual location—IPL Ponds (BLW). The only report away from extreme W Iowa was 1 on 26 Apr at Goose L. in Greene Co. (SD).
- American Avocet:** First report was of 3 on 15 Apr at Willow Sl. (BLW). The weekend of 26-27 Apr produced many sightings in Iowa with peak of 50 in Fremont and Mills counties (RKM, FLM, MPR, BPR); 8 were seen near New Albin on 27 Apr (\*RZ). Last report was 3 May near Union (Phyllis Harris fide BPR).
- Greater Yellowlegs:** There were many early records this year. Singles on 8 Mar at Saylorville Res (SD) and 10 Mar at Fisher L., Polk Co. (SD) set first and second record early dates; 1 on 16 Mar at Runnells G.A. tied the third early date (JSi). Peak was 38 on 26 Apr in Guthrie Co. (SD); 1 was late 20 May in Lyon Co. (SD).
- Lesser Yellowlegs:** 1 on 10 March is the second earliest. Peak was 575 on 26 Apr in Guthrie Co. (SD). One on 31 May in Hamilton Co. is the second latest (SD).
- Solitary Sandpiper:** 1 on 4 Apr at Hickory Grove P. (SD) is the record earliest.
- Willet:** There were many reports—1 on 3 Apr in Hamilton Co. (SD) is the second earliest. Peaks were on 26 Apr with 85 in C Iowa (SD) and 72 at Coralville Res. (THK).
- Spotted Sandpiper:** 1 on 17 Apr near Ledges S.P. (SD) is the second earliest.
- Upland Sandpiper:** 8 reports were received that listed birds from C, NW, SW, and SE Iowa. The peak was 5 on 26 Apr in Johnson Co. (JF).
- Hudsonian Godwit:** This was a banner year for this species. The first were 4 on 15 Apr at Saylorville Res. (SD). Peaks included 200 on 13 May at Riverton A. (THK) and 144 on 18 May in Greene Co. (SD).
- Marbled Godwit:** Reports include 1 on 15 Apr at Big Creek (SD), 2 on 16 Apr at Larson M. (HZ), 6 on 19 Apr at Princeton M. (PCP), 1 at Jamaica on 26 Apr (SD), 1 w. of Bayard on 10 May (SD), and 19 e. of Carroll on 18 May (SD).
- Ruddy Turnstone:** 31 birds were reported, mostly from C Iowa, from 14 to 25 May. Peak was 11 on 25 May in Greene Co. (SD).
- Sanderling:** 1 was early on 20 Apr at Big Creek S.P. (SD).
- Semipalmated Sandpiper:** 1 was early on 19 Apr at Big Creek S.P. (SD).
- Western Sandpiper:** 1 was reported with details on 3 May at Bays Branch (RKM) and 1 was documented on 14 May at Colo Ponds (\*PM).



**Least Sandpiper:** 1 was identified by its yellow legs and call on 14 Mar at Riverton A. (SD) for a record early date.

**White-rumped Sandpiper:** 8 were early on 2 May near Granger (SD). By far the largest count was 1,000 on 13 May in Fremont Co. (FLM, et al.).

**Baird's Sandpiper:** 2 on 25 Mar at Big Creek S.P. (SD) were the second earliest on record; 2 were seen in Mills Co. on 26 Apr (MPR); and 2 were at Coralville Res. on 3 May (THK).

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** 1 on 9 Mar at Cone M. (THK) is the second earliest record. Peak was 400 near Webb on 30 Apr (MMB).

**Dunlin:** Peak was 34 at Colo Ponds on 19 May (HZ).

**Stilt Sandpiper:** These were somewhat scarce this spring; 2 on 21 Apr in Boone Co. (SD) set an early record; 5 were at Colo Ponds on 22 May (HZ).

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** 2 were in Guthrie Co. and 1 was in Greene Co. on 10 May (SD); 1 was e. of Zeiring on 14 May (\*MPR, \*BPR).

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** Details were given for 1 on 26 Apr in Guthrie Co. (SD) for an early record. Peak was 61 in Greene Co. on 18 May (SD).

**Long-billed Dowitcher:** 1 was identified by call on 23 Mar at Bays Branch (SD) for an early record. Peak was 72 at Rush L., Clay Co., on 7 May (MMB, no details). Most observers are now supplying details with reports of both dowitchers—thank you!

**Common Snipe:** Peak was 85 in Boone Co. on 3 Apr (SD).

**American Woodcock:** 1 was early on 3 Mar at Willow Sl. (BLW). An adult and 4 young were photographed near McGregor on 8 May (Ron Ridnour fide HZ).

**Wilson's Phalarope:** Not many reports this year; 1 on 21 Apr in Hamilton Co. was the first (SD); and the only big group was 50 at Riverton A. on 13 May (THK, et al.).

**Red-necked Phalarope:** 2 reports—1 on 14 May at Teig's M. (SD) and 1 on 19 May in Greene Co. (JF).

**Franklin's Gull:** 2 were early on 14 Mar at L. Manawa (SD). Several groups of 60 to 70 were seen, but the peak count of 125 at Keokuk on 19 May was an unusual number for E Iowa (RCe).

**Bonaparte's Gull:** 1 at Bays Branch on 10 Mar (SD) set a new early date. Peak was 60 on 17 Apr w. of Buffalo (PCP).

**Ring-billed Gull:** Peaks were 1,500 on 20 Mar at Saylorville Res. (SD) and 490 on 23 Mar at Coralville Res. (THK).

**Herring Gull:** 30 were noted at Saylorville Res. on 20 Mar (SD).

**Caspian Tern:** 2 on 20 Apr at Coralville Res. (JF) set a new early date. Peak was 43 at IPL Ponds on 31 May (BLW).

**Common Tern:** Details were given for 1 on 18 Apr at Big Creek S.P. (SD), which is a second earliest record. Details were given for 4 others from Coralville Res., Nashua, IPL Ponds, and Saylorville Res. (THK, FLM, SD, BLW).

**Forster's Tern:** 1 at Bays Branch on 7 Apr (JSi) set a record early date. Peak was 8 in Appanoose Co. on 26 Apr (RLC). On 26 May a nest with two eggs was found at Big Wall L. (SD).

**Least Tern:** From 11 May on, 1 to 3 were at the IPL Ponds (m.ob.). One was in SW Fremont Co. on 13 May (THK, et al.). Four were seen in a flooded corn field in Plymouth Co. on 19 May (SD).

**Black Tern:** 3 were early at IPL Ponds on 3 May (BP, LPa). Peak was 460 on 19 May at Keokuk (RCe).

- Black-billed Cuckoo:** 1 in Shimek Forest on 5 May (RCe) set a second early date. Peak was 8 at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 14 May (JF). More black-bills were reported than yellow-bills.
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** Only three were reported from mid-May to the end of the month.
- Eastern Screech-Owl:** On 23 Apr feathered young were found in a downed tree in Story Co. (Russell Meiners fide JJD). The young normally fledge in June.
- Burrowing Owl:** None reported.
- Long-eared Owl:** 1 was in w. Plymouth Co. on 19 May (SD). A nest with 3 young was photographed in Clarke Co. on 28 May (JSi, SD).
- Short-eared Owl:** 1 was still in Lyon Co. on 20 May (SD).
- Northern Saw-whet Owl:** At least 6 remained in Ledges S.P. area until 5 Apr (SD).
- Common Nighthawk:** 1 at Burlington on 24 Apr (EC) and 2 on 26 Apr (RCe) at Keokuk set first and second early records. On 20 and 22 May over 100 were seen per day in Muscatine (GDW).
- Chuck-will's-widow:** 2 were back at the normal place north of Waubonsie S.P. from 10 May on. (m.ob.)
- Chimney Swift:** The first were 3 at Keokuk on 15 Apr (RCe).
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** 1 on 26 Apr at Iowa City (JF) is the second earliest. Another was at Keokuk on 3 May (John Cecil fide RCe).
- Pileated Woodpecker:** Birds away from their usual E Iowa location included 1 at Marshalltown on 10 Apr (Betty Savage fide BPr) and 2 at Grammer Grove P. on 10 May (MPr, BPr).
- Olive-sided Flycatcher:** 6 birds were reported from 10 May to the end of the month, all from C to EC Iowa.
- Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** Details were given for 1 at Big Sand Mound Preserve on 19 May (PCP), 1 on 10 May at Coralville Res. (TJS), 1 in Franklin Co. on 20 May (MPr), and 1 to 3 were seen daily from 21 to 29 May at Brookside P. (PM).
- Acadian Flycatcher:** Reports from 4 May on were from the usual spots: Ledges S.P., Amana Woods, Shimek Forest, and Brookside P.
- Alder Flycatcher:** 1 on 12 May at Ames (PM) set a record early date. Others were from 18 May to the end of month, with a peak of 5 in Mills Co. on 28 May (BLW).
- Willow Flycatcher:** Peak was 7 on 24 May at Muskrat Sl. (TJS).
- Least Flycatcher:** 4 heard on 25 Apr at Shimek Forest (RCe) set a record early date.
- Eastern Phoebe:** 1 was early at Red Rock Res. on 18 Mar (JSi). The peak was 22 on 5 Apr at Ledges S.P. (SD).
- Western Kingbird:** All reports were from W Iowa with a peak of 3 on 18 May near Quimby (MMB) and on 20 May at Forney L. (JF).
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** 1 was photographed near Gilbert on 27 Apr (G. Harper fide JJD).
- Purple Martin:** 1 on 23 Mar (DDM) tied the record earliest date. While most reports noted small numbers, there were 120 on 26 May at Mosman's colony in Polk Co.
- Tree Swallow:** The first was at Big Creek S.P. on 25 Mar (SD).
- Northern Rough-winged Swallow:** 6 were early on 10 Apr at Little Wall L. (SD).
- Bank Swallow:** 1 on 14 Apr at Big Creek S.P. (SD) and 1 on 16 Apr at Swan L., Johnson Co. (TJS) set second and third earliest dates.
- Cliff Swallow:** 1 was early on 26 Apr at Finn Pond (SD).



- Red-breasted Nuthatch:** 1 was still in Iowa City on 1 May (TJS), and another was at Sweet M. on 12 May (FLM).
- Brown Creeper:** 2 pairs were seen near the mouth of the Cedar R. on 30 May; they acted territorial (PCP).
- Carolina Wren:** 1 was seen at Shimek Forest on 5 Apr (RCe). Another was in Iowa City on 13 Apr (THK). Finally, 2 were seen and the nest was found in Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 14 May (JF).
- Bewick's Wren:** 1 was well documented at Burlington from 11-23 Apr (\*EC, \*RCe, \*JF).
- House Wren:** 1 was early in Keokuk on 9 Apr (RCe).
- Winter Wren:** Reports were from 30 Mar to 16 Apr at 4 locations in C and E Iowa.
- Sedge Wren:** 1 was early at Goose L., Greene Co., on 26 Apr (SD). Wilson reports more than normal in SW Iowa.
- Marsh Wren:** 1 at Doolittle Prairie on 19 Apr (JJD) is the second earliest on record.
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** Several were still at Lakin Sl. (Guthrie Co.) on 18 May (RKM).
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** 2 were early at Ledges S.P. on 14 Apr (SD). Another was also early on 17 Apr at Shimek Forest (RCe). Four on 24 May were unusual for Cold Springs S.P. in SW Iowa (TB).
- Eastern Bluebird:** Numbers seem to be good with 10 nests on a trail in Polk Co. (DDM).
- Townsend's Solitaire:** 1 was found on 5 May in SE Webster Co. (\*EM) and the bird was relocated on 6 May (SD, details).
- Veery:** 8 were found at Ledges S.P. on 10 May (SD).
- Gray-cheeked Thrush:** Largest number reported was 4 on 8 May at Brookside P. (PM).
- Swainson's Thrush:** Peak was 14 at Brookside P. on 15 May (PM).
- Hermit Thrush:** Most observers reported a poor migration with very few found, but 41 were seen on 14 Apr at Ledges S.P. (SD).
- American Robin:** A completely albino bird overwintered at Underwood (Paul Kristofferson fide BPa).
- Gray Catbird:** The first arrived on 25 Apr in Shimek Forest (RCe) and on 26 Apr at Coralville Res. (THK).
- Northern Mockingbird:** Reported from Polk, Johnson, Fremont, and Guthrie counties.
- Brown Thrasher:** 1 on 1 Mar in Story Co. (SD) set a record early date; 1 on 31 Mar at Shimek Forest (RCe) is the second earliest; and 1 on 6 Apr in Ames (JJD) ties the third earliest.
- Water Pipit:** 2 on 9 Mar at Cone M. (THK) provide the second earliest date; 1 was at the Cherokee Airport on 5 May (DBi); 2 were at Coralville Res. on 12 May (THK).
- Bohemian Waxwing:** An addition to the winter report is 1 on 13 Jan at Big Creek S.P. (SD).
- Northern Shrike:** An amazing 18 were reported through 15 Mar from C and E Iowa.
- Loggerhead Shrike:** Numbers seem very good especially in C Iowa where 12 nests were found (SD).
- White-eyed Vireo:** This species was almost common this year, with many reports received. Peaks were 4 on 6 May at Shimek F. (RCe), 4 on 13 May in Dallas Co. (RKM), and 4 on 14 May at Shimek F. (JF).

- Bell's Vireo:** First report was from Mills Co. on 11 May (BLW). Others were noted in NW, C, and E Iowa.
- Solitary Vireo:** The first were on 26 Apr with 2 at Saylorville (SD) and 1 at Shimek F. (RCe). Peak was 12 on 11 May at Brookside P. (PM).
- Warbling Vireo:** 1 was early in Keokuk on 27 Apr (RCe).
- Philadelphia Vireo:** Early reports were 1 on 3 May in Van Buren Co. (RLC) and 1 on 3 May in Waterloo (FLM).
- Red-eyed Vireo:** 1 was early on 27 Apr at Shimek F. (RCe).
- Blue-winged Warbler:** 6 on 25 Apr (RCe) at Shimek F. set a second earliest record; 20 singing males were found there on 20 May (RCe). A Brewster's hybrid was seen 9 May at Grammer Grove (\*BPr).
- Golden-winged Warbler:** 1 on 29 Apr in Ames (SD) set the record earliest date; 3 were found on 1 May in Iowa City (TJS, JF).
- Tennessee Warbler:** 1 on 20 Apr at Sweet M. (FLM) set the record earliest date. Peak was 170 on 11 May at Brookside P. (PM).
- Orange-crowned Warbler:** 1 was early on 19 Apr in Ames (EM). The peak of 11 was noted on 29 Apr at Brookside P. (PM).
- Nashville Warbler:** Early singles were noted on 26 Apr at Saylorville Res. (SD) and at Shimek F. (RCe). The peak was 42 on 4 May at Brookside P. (PM).
- Northern Parula:** 2 were early at Ledges S.P. on 14 Apr (SD); 2 were seen carrying nesting material on 9 May at Wildcat Den S.P. (TLD).
- Chestnut-sided Warbler:** 1 was early on 3 May in Waterloo (FLM), tying the second early record; 16 were at Brookside P. on 10 May (PM).
- Cape May Warbler:** All reports: 1 on 8 May at Brookside P. (PM); 1 on 10 May at Ledges S.P. (SD, EM); 3 on 11 May at Mormon Ridge, Marshall Co. (MPr, BPr); 1 on 11 May at Sweet Marsh (FLM); 3 on 11 May at Brookside P. (PM); and 2 on 12 May at Sweet Marsh (RKM, FLM).
- Black-throated Blue Warbler:** A singing male was seen at Sweet M. on 11 May (FLM). On 13 May a female was found at Wildcat Den S.P. (TLD).
- Yellow-rumped Warbler:** 1 was early on 1 Apr at Ames (SD). Peak was 60 on 16 Apr at Ames (EM).
- Black-throated Green Warbler:** 2 were photographed on 8 Apr in Ames (\*BuS) to set a second earliest date; 1 was still at Brookside P. on 27 May (PM).
- Blackburnian Warbler:** 1 was in W Iowa on 24 May at Cold Springs S.P. (TB).
- Yellow-throated Warbler:** 2 were early at Shimek F. on 17 Apr (RCe); 1 appeared at Ledges S.P. on 19 Apr (RKM, SD); 2 were at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 3 May (RLC) and 5 were there on 14 May (JF).
- Pine Warbler:** The only report was 1 at Hickory Hill P. on 11 May (\*TJS).
- Prairie Warbler:** None reported.
- Palm Warbler:** 1 on 20 Apr at Swan L., Johnson Co. (THK) set a second early date.
- Bay-breasted Warbler:** The first, peak, and last reports were made on same date, 11 May, with 1 at Mormon Ridge (MPr), 4 at Brookside Park (PM), and 20 at Sweet M. No other data were received.
- Blackpoll Warbler:** 1 was still at Ledges S.P. on 31 May (RKM).
- Cerulean Warbler:** 1 on 24 April at Shimek F. is the second earliest (RCe). Peak was 5 on 12 May at Ledges S.P. (SD).
- Black-and-white Warbler:** The first was 1 on 20 Apr in Iowa City (JF). A singing male was at Shimek F. on 31 May.
- Prothonotary Warbler:** 1 was out of place in Sioux City on 28 May (\*BH).



**Worm-eating Warbler:** The first was at Hickory Hill P. on 27 Apr (TJS); 4 were singing in Shimek F. on 12 May (RCe); and 1 was at Wildcat Den S.P. on 13 May (TLD).

**Northern Waterthrush:** Peak was 25 at Big Wall L. on 10 May (EM).

**Louisiana Waterthrush:** 1 at Ledges S.P. on 5 Apr (SD) is the third earliest date, falling behind a new early record date of 31 Mar when 2 were found at Shimek F. (RCe, details). Others were noted at Ames, Waubonsie S.P., and near Madrid.

**Kentucky Warbler:** 1 on 26 Apr is the second earliest on record (RCe). This species was almost common in C and SE Iowa this spring.

**Connecticut Warbler:** 9 reports were received with dates ranging from 10 May, when 1 was early at Iowa City (JF), to 30 May. Reports as expected were from E Iowa and a few from C Iowa. One was out of place and was banded on 30 May at Laurens (RVH).

**Mourning Warbler:** 1 on 4 May at Shimek F. (RCe) set a record early date. A peak of 10 was seen on 26 May at Mormon Ridge (MP); 5 were still at Ledges S.P. on 31 May (RKM).

**Common Yellowthroat:** A seemingly incredible number of 800 (approximate) were noted in C Iowa on 10 May (EM).

**Hooded Warbler:** 1 was first noted at Amana Woods on 4 May (THK, TJS); 1 was at Ledges S.P. on 10 May (RKM); and 1 was at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 14 May (JF). All were males.

**Wilson's Warbler:** 1 was early in Davenport on 3 May (PCP).

**Canada Warbler:** 1 was early at Big Wall L. on 10 May (SD, EM); 3 were found on 20 May at Brookside (PM).

**Yellow-breasted Chat:** 1 was early on 5 May at Hickory Hill P.; 14 were reported, all from C and E Iowa.

**Summer Tanager:** Reports were from the usual areas in Van Buren, Appanoose, and Fremont counties.

**Scarlet Tanager:** 1 at Shimek F. on 26 Apr (RCe) represents the second earliest record. One on 10 May at Brookside P. (PM) was interesting in that it was a male with a red wing bar on each wing.

**Western Tanager:** A male was described in a yard in Decorah on 22, 24 Apr (\*HH)

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Many early sightings, with one on 24 Apr at Burlington (EC) tying the second early date.

**Blue Grosbeak:** 1 on 7 May in Cedar Falls (\*GBe, \*VB) was not only early (second earliest record), but was northeast of usual range. All other reports were from W Iowa.

**Lazuli Bunting:** A male was described e. of Larrabee, Cherokee Co., on 16 May (\*MMB).

**Indigo Bunting:** 1 on 26 Apr at Saylorville is a new record early date (SD).

**Dickcissel:** 1 was early near Iowa City on 27 Apr (TJS).

**Rufous-sided Towhee:** 1 of the spotted race was banded on 24 Apr near Laurens (RVH).

**Chipping Sparrow:** 1 in Ames on 2 Apr is a record earliest (SD, EM); 5 were there on 5 Apr (SD).

**Clay-colored Sparrow:** Good numbers were reported from across the state. An interesting note is that 7 territorial males were found in Lyon Co. on 20 May (SD).

**Field Sparrow:** 1 on 23 Mar in Story Co. (EM) was early.

**Vesper Sparrow:** 1 on 18 Mar in Marion Co. is the third earliest on record (JSi).

**Lark Sparrow:** 1 on 7 Apr at Lakin Sl. is the earliest on record; 5 were at Ledges S.P. on 30 Apr (MPr).

**Lark Bunting:** None reported.

**Savannah Sparrow:** 1 was early on 25 Mar at Jester Park (Polk Co.) (SD).

**Grasshopper Sparrow:** 1 was singing on 10 Apr in Warren Co. (JSi) to tie the earliest record.

**Henslow's Sparrow:** None reported.

**Le Conte's Sparrow:** The first (and most) were 4 on 4 Apr at Doolittle Prairie (SD); 1 was nearly late at Sweet M. on 11 May (FLM).

**Sharp-tailed Sparrow:** None reported.

**Fox Sparrow:** Peak was 68 in Polk Co. on 30 Mar (SD).

**Lincoln's Sparrow:** 1 tied the third early date on 14 Apr at Ledges S.P. (SD).

**White-throated Sparrow:** 1 was still at Mormon Ridge on 24 May (MPr).

**White-crowned Sparrow:** Peak was 40 on 26 Apr at Coralville Res (THK).

**Harris' Sparrow:** One observer (BLW) noted this species seemed to leave SW Iowa early this year.

**Lapland Longspur:** Peak was 4,000 near Larrabee on 13 Mar (MMB). Last report was 2 on 12 Apr in Cerro Gordo Co. (SD).

**Smith's Longspur:** 4 were seen north of Red Oak on 2 Mar (RKM); 1 was noted on 7 Mar in Greene Co. (SD); and 1 was documented on 7 Apr in Johnson Co. (\*TJS).

**Chestnut-collared Longspur:** 11 were seen on 15 Apr in Woodbury Co. (\*DBi) and a road-killed specimen was sent to Iowa State University; 4 were also noted on 16 Apr at L. Manawa (\*BP a).

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:** 1 on 4 Apr in Story Co. (SD) is a new early record date. Staudt noted fewer than normal in E Iowa.

**Rusty Blackbird:** Peak was 1,000 at Big Wall L. on 29 Mar (SD, EM).

**Brewer's Blackbird:** 6 were described at Little Wall L. on 12 Apr (SD).

**Great-tailed Grackle:** Truly a banner year! Sightings of 1 to 12 were made at Lakin Sl., Long Pond (Guthrie Co.), Goose L. (Greene Co.), Big Wall L., and Forney L. Five nests with young were found 25 May at Lakin Sl. and one nest was at Long Pond (SD).

**Orchard Oriole:** 2 were early at Big Creek on 2 May (SD).

**Northern Oriole:** 1 on 24 Apr tied the second earliest date (JSi). Many others appeared on 26 Apr.

**Purple Finch:** The last were on 6 May with 2 at Ames (SD) and 1 at Orange City (JV).

**House Finch:** 1 male was reported at Cedar Rapids on 20 Apr (Bill Rhodes fide THK). On 31 Mar a male was at Swaledale feeder (LG). A female was described in Iowa City on 10 May (\*RJH). Several came to a Davenport feeder all May (Harold Ray fide PCP) and Petersen noted a young bird with down on its head, which may indicate nesting.

**Common Redpoll:** Last report was 4 in Boone Co. on 13 Mar (SD).

**Pine Siskin:** A few were still present in C Iowa at the end of May (DDM).

**Evening Grosbeak:** After an invasion winter we might expect a few to straggle into spring. And so it happened. Eleven observers reported 58 birds from all over the state with the last being 5 on 6 May at Cherokee (DBi).



## CONTRIBUTORS (\* = documentation only)

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## OTHER OBSERVERS

Cathryn A. Baldner; Corey Blevins; Lewis Blevins; John Cordell; Chuck Fuller; John Goddard; Phyllis Harris; James Huntington; Bob Livermore; Carol McMillen; Ken Olson; Mary Lou Petersen; Jerry L. Probst; Doug Rose; Gil Sandvich; W. Ross Silcock; Romona Sommerlot; and Carol Thompson.

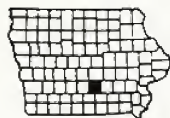
## COMMENT

When I first agreed to compile the Field Reports for the spring season, I anticipated a big task. Little did I realize just how big. I want to thank all contributors for submitting, for the most part, excellent reports. Well written reports, remember neatness counts, make the compilation much easier. Almost everyone listed their birds in the correct taxonomic order; this greatly saves the compiler time.

*R.R. 2, Box 153, Perry, Iowa 50220*

## THAYER'S GULL AT RED ROCK RESERVOIR

CARL J. BENDORF



On December 10, 1985 I made a trip to the tailwater area below Red Rock Reservoir dam in Marion County in order to look for a white-winged gull found two days earlier by Darwin Koenig. I arrived at 2 p.m. and found 200 Herring Gulls and 12 Ring-billed Gulls flying, feeding, or resting on several sand bars. Soon, Tom Kent arrived and we spent some time studying and photographing a first-winter Glaucous Gull. While scanning the main group of gulls on a sand bar I noticed a first-winter Herring type bird that was lighter and slightly smaller than the 1st winter Herring Gulls.

The bill was smaller in proportion (bulk and length) than that of a Herring Gull. It was all black and did not have a pronounced gonys. The eye was dark. The legs appeared dark, perhaps with a slight reddish cast especially on the back side of the legs. The body was uniform light brown and finely mottled. The mottling was a bit coarser on the wings and the mantle. The exposed primaries on the folded wing were a darker shade of brown. The overall color was both lighter and more uniform than nearby first-winter Herrings; however, compared to the first-winter Glaucous, this bird was closer in color to the Herrings.

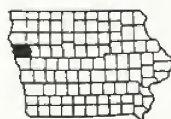
After about 15 minutes, I flushed the resting gull flock and followed the bird in question with binoculars as it circled at 50 to 150 yards. From below the secondaries and all of the primaries were uniform silvery-white. I did not see any dark in the primaries, even at the tip. The upperwing surface was uniformly colored over the whole length of the wing and was the same color as the back. From above the outer primaries and trailing edge of the wing were a little darker than the rest of the wing. The tail had a terminal band similar to that of first-winter Herring Gulls, except the color was lighter than a Herring, similar to the rest of the body of the bird. The bird was flushed twice on this heavily overcast day. Both Tom Kent and I took photographs of the bird.

825 7th Ave., Iowa City, IA 52240



## CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR IN WOODBURY COUNTY

DICK BIERMAN



On 15 April 1986, I was traveling down Iowa Highway 31 in Woodbury County after a spring blizzard, so there was snow on the ground. On the shoulder of the highway, large numbers of birds were gathering. About two miles north of Smithland, I noticed some unusual birds flare from the edge of the road and alight again as we passed. I turned around and drove back slowly, parked, and watched the eleven birds from about fifty feet with my 7 x 35 binoculars. They were sparrow-size with short tails and stocky bodies. The breast, sides and bellies were black. The nape was rust-colored. They had a yellowish throat that was separated from the black by a thin white necklace. Above the eye was a white eyebrow. The crown was black. The black on the tail formed an inverted "V" as the birds flew. I had seen this species at Felton Prairie in Clay County, Minnesota last summer and knew them to be Chestnut-collared Longspurs. The next day, as I passed the same location, I drove slowly and was able to find a road-killed specimen, which confirmed my sighting. The specimen has been sent to Iowa State University. I feel that the strong storm had pushed the birds east of their normal migrational path, which is to the west of Iowa.

901 Harris, Cherokee, IA 51012



*Chestnut-collared Longspur specimen. Photos by J. J. Dinsmore.*

## LAZULI BUNTING IN CHEROKEE COUNTY

MARION M. BREWER



The afternoon of 16 May 1986 was cool and cloudy with a promise of rain. Not wanting to stay indoors, I proceeded to the Martin-Little Sioux Recreation Area, a 170 acre park on the east side of the Little Sioux River that is 4 miles east and one-half mile south of Larrabee. The park has a wide variety of habitats with a large amount of hardwood forest and three pine planting of about five acres each. Near the east edge of the park, I pulled off to look at 6 male Indigo Buntings feeding on the roadway. At first I thought a bluebird had joined them, but the white wing bars told me I had a new bird for my life list. Through my telescope, mounted on the car window, I observed that the bird was the same size as the Indigo Buntings with a bright, almost iridescent, medium-blue head, two white wing bars (top one wider), cinnamon colored chest, white belly, and much darker wing and tail. The buntings appeared to be feeding on dandelion seeds. The road in this section of the park runs along the main timber with honeysuckle hedge on the other side of the road. On the way out, I had to put my windshield wipers to work.

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